



# News Release

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## **Unclean air can cast a blur over outdoor summer fun, create health hazards**

*Pollution poses a threat to people with heart, lung diseases—and others, too*

**OLYMPIA** — Summer is beautiful in Washington – a time when people like to be outdoors.

Sometimes, though, several consecutive days of hot, sunny weather can produce hazy, smoggy conditions. When that happens, ozone levels may be high. The foul air often called smog contains ozone, a kind of air pollution that can threaten the health of people with heart or lung diseases, such as asthma.

Summer can also bring events such as the 17-acre fire that burned in the Capitol State Forest southwest of Olympia during the Independence Day weekend, sending smoke into the air. Smoky air means harmful particles are abundant. Wildfires like the one in Capitol Forest and other outdoor burning contribute to air pollution by releasing fine particles and toxic air pollutants.

Ozone and fine particles in the air can affect healthy people, too. Infants, children, and people 65 and older can have health problems from breathing polluted air.

Federal regulations have recently set stricter standards for ozone and fine particles because of studies showing many serious health effects.

When people are active outdoors – walking, running, hiking, playing or working – they breathe more deeply and more often, which increases the amount of air pollution they breathe in. The level of air pollution that causes health problems is different for each person. For example, when air pollution rises, daily activities such as walking the dog may cause problems for some people. Others may not be affected until doing heavier activity such as running or hiking.

Be sure to check air quality conditions before taking part in outdoor activities, especially if you're in one of the high-risk groups. When air quality is poor, you may have to limit or postpone outdoor activities.

Information on [local air quality conditions](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/air/local.html) (<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/air/local.html>) in communities around the state can be found online. Regular updates on air quality are available by subscribing to the American Lung Association of Washington "[Breath Easy Network](http://www.alaw.org/air_quality/e-forecast_service)" ([http://www.alaw.org/air\\_quality/e-forecast\\_service](http://www.alaw.org/air_quality/e-forecast_service)). Color-coded information on these sites lists air quality in different zones going from good (green) to hazardous (maroon). Plan outdoor activities for days when air quality is in the "good" or green zone.

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Visit the Washington Department of Health Web site at <a href="http://www.doh.wa.gov">http://www.doh.wa.gov</a> for a healthy dose of information.
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